DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 247 184 SO 015 804

AUTHOR Fox, Louise W.
TITLE College Students' Attitudes towards Social, Physical and Political Deviancy.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (Baltimore, MD, April 12-15, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitude Measures; Beliefs; *College Students; Higher Education; *Labeling (of Persons); *Physical Characteristics; *Political Attitudes; Questionnaires; Social Science Research; *Social Status; *Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Bogardus Social Distance Scale

ABSTRACT

This study identifies the attitudes of college students toward a variety of persons, each of whom deviated from the normal in one specific way--either in terms of social status, physical condition, or political point of view. A questionnaire was devised, employing the Bogardus Social Distance Scale. Respondents included 184 undergraduates and 51 graduate students who were enrolled in public and private colleges in the American northeast. Respondents remained anonymous, indicating sex, year in college, age, and how they felt about 24 immigrants applying for permission to enter the United States. Findings included the following: (1) the typical respondent rejected significantly more deviants than they accepted; (2) there was a greater acceptance of the social-physical deviants (e.g., the blind, the illiterate, and the retarded) than the political deviants (e.g., supporters of communism, Black Separatism, Nazism, and the Ku Klux Klan), with social-physical deviants receiving 25 percent complete acceptance, 45 percent limited acceptance, and 30 percent rejection as compared to political deviants who received 6 percent complete acceptance, 28 percent limited acceptance, and 67 percent rejection; and (3) there was no difference between men and women in the degree to which they accepted or rejected any of the deviants. (LH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Louise W. Fox

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED247184

COLLEGE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL, PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL DEVIANCY

Louise W. Fox, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Hunter College

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
Eastern Psychological Association
(Baltimore, MD, April 12-15, 1984)

SP 015 801

COLLEGE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL, PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL DEVIANCY

Louise W. Fox, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Hunter College

I. Introduction

This study proposed to identify the attitudes college students express towards a variety of persons, each of whom deviates from the normal in one specific way, either because of social status, physical condition or political point of view. Methodologically, the study built upon and extended the work of Emory Bogardus who, in the late 1920's began a series of studies of racial and ethnic acceptance; and it proposed to adopt Bogardus' technique to identify levels of acceptance of deviancy among college students.

It was felt that the extent to which college students were willing to accept differences, both in kind and in degree, would reflect their own attitudes and stereotypes.

This study provides some basis for 1) estimating the extent to which college students accept social and political differences; 2) providing some insights into those deviations which are considered most and least acceptable; and 3) measuring the extent to which the stimulus characteristics are stereotyped.

II. Review of Literature

In 1928, Emory S. Bogardus, using a scale he had developed for measuring social distance, published the results of a study using this scale showing the extent to which Americans accepted various ethnic groups. A few years later (1933) the famous study of stereotypes among Princeton undergraduates was published by Katz and Braly. In the ensuing 50 years, numerous studies have been pursued, to determine the extent of stereotyping, the factors relating to stereotyping, and the effects of programs in higher education as related to

stereotyping. Cauthen et al. (1971) surveyed a body of some 200 articles dealing with stereotypes, and found a remarkable stability in the content of stereotypes over some 40 years.

Owen, Eisner and McFaul (1981) replicated the Bogardus studies examining the rates at which social distance scores slowly decreased over the years, and bearing out Bogardus' own prediction that while social distance scores would grow closeer over the years, they would not disappear entirely in the forseeable future.

III. Procedure

A. The Questionnaire

A questionnaire was devised employing Bogardus' scales of social distance. As Bogardus did, the respondent was asked to indicate how he felt about 24 immigrants applying for permission to enter the United States. Respondents indicated their feelings using Bogardus' 7-interval scale reflecting different degrees of social distance (or acceptance). These are listed on your handout at the top of page 1.

However, where Bogardus had subjects repond to racial or ethnic groups, the present study used 13 social-physical and 11 political deviant categories. The 13 social-physical deviants are listed in the middle of page 1. The 11 political deviants are listed on the bottom of page 1.

B. The Sample

The sample consisted of 235 students enrolled in public and private colleges in the American Northeast. 184 undergraduate and 51 graduate students were involved and the sample consisted of 154 females and 81 males. Respondents remained anonymous, but indicated sex, year in college and age, so that sub-analyses were possible by these variables. All participants had the purposes of the research and the contemplated professional reporting of the data explained to them in prepared instructions and completed the form voluntarily.

The mean age of the undergraduates was 22.6 years; and of the graduate students 32.5 years.

B. Methods of Data Analysis

For purposes of this study, the categories indicating that the student accepted the potential immigrant into his family through marriage or to a close personal friendship were considered indicative of complete acceptance. Similarly, at the other extreme of the scale, the categories indicating that the student excluded the potential immigrant from the U.S.A. or permitted him or her to enter only as a visitor were considered to indicate rejection. The three intermediate categories were considered to indicate limited acceptance.

Distribution of responses were derived for each of the 24 "immigrants" and summarized by sex. Comparisons of these distributions were made through chi square analysis using the 0.05 level of significance. In addition, for each respondent, the number of immigrants completely accepted, rejected and given limited acceptance was determined so that distribution of overall response to the 24 groups was available.

D. Hypotheses

In view of recent studies suggesting liberal student views, it was expected that the students would be accepting of deviancy, and so it was hypothesized that

1. There would be a greater amont of complete acceptance than rejection of the deviant groups.

Because of present discussion over political deviations, and social movement such as the effort to recognize alcoholism as a disease, or to mainstream the disabled, it was hypothesized that

2. There would be a greater complete acceptance of the social-physical deviants than of the political deviants.

Because both men and women in this study were college students their intellectual curiosity is assumed to be equal and it was hypothesized that

3. There would be no difference between men and women in the degree to which they accept of reject the deviants by type of deviancy-social-physical or political.

Table 1 presents the mean percent of complete acceptance, limited acdeptance and rejection of each specific social-physical and political deviant. Table 2 lists the deviants in order by the percent of complete acceptance.

As you can see, the range in complete acceptance was from the one percent who completely accepted the KKK to the 69% who completely accepted the Blind.

Considering separate deviant categories, the deviant most often completely accepted was the blind person, the only deviant completely accepted by more than half the respondents (69%), and rejected by fewer than one in ten (5%). Two other deviants were completely accepted by at least two respondents in five - the atheist (49%) and the marijuana user (40%).

One-fourth or more of the respondents were completely accepting of five other deviants - the illiterate (36%), the British Socialist (34%), the non-hospitalized person in psychotherapy (32%), the mentally retarded (30%), and the homosexual (30%).

The remaining applicants were completely accepted by less than one-quarter of the respondents, with one in ten or fewer accepting a Chinese Communist (8%), a supporter of the Ayatollah (6%), a supporter of Castro (7%), or a heroin addict (6%). At the very bottom of the list, fewer than five percent of the respondents accepted supporters of Black Separatism, Apartheid, Nazism, guerilla terrorism, or the Ku Klux Klan.

To test hypothesis one, that there would be greater acceptance than rejection, the total number of deviants completely accepted was from 0 to 16. Evidence of the low level of acceptance is the group of 35 students (15%) who completely accepted no deviant category, and the 83 students (36%) who completely accepted only one, two or three deviants. Thus more than half (51%) of the students completely accepted three or fewer deviants. Moreover, only 25 students (11%) completely accepted half or more of the deviants.

This analysis also reflects the widespread base of rejection. The range is from the 5 students of the 235 who rejected no one, to the 2 students who rejected all 24 deviants. 90 students (385) rejected half or more of the deviants, and an additional 60 (25%) rejected between eight and twelve.

The difference in the distribution of acceptance and rejection was statistically significant by the square, and so the first hypothesis, that students would be more accepting than rejecting was rejected.

Hypothesis 2, was that there would be greater complete acceptance of social-physical than of political deviants. A glance at the column labeled "stimulus group" in Table 1 indicates that these data support the second hypothesis. The "stimulus group" column shows that of the 12 groups with the highest percents of complete acceptarce, only one was political (British Socialist). The 12 groups in the lower half of the ordered list of 24 categories are made up of 10 groups of political deviancy and only 2 social-physical (non-self-supporting and heroin addict).

A summary analysis showed that the social-physical deviants were completely accepted 25% of the time, received limited acceptance 45% of the time, and were rejected only 30% of the time. By contrast the political deviants were completely

accepted only 6% of the time -- one-fifth as often -- and received limited acceptance 28% of the time, being completely rejected fully two-thirds (67%) of the time. These differences were significant at the 0.01 level of chi square, and so support the second hypothesis, that there would be greater acceptance of the social-physical deviants than of the political categories.

E Female and Male Comparisons

To test the third hypothesis, that there would be no difference in perceptions related to sex of the respondent, the distribution of complete acceptance and rejection by sex were tested through chi square. There were no statitically significant differences for the total 24 categories and so the data supports the 3rd hypothesis of no sex differences.

Even within the separate categories there were few differences by sex. Women were twice as accepting of the mentally ill (21% to 10%) and also more often acepted the atheist (52 to 40) - conversely the men more often accepted the prostitute (28% to 16%).

IV. Discussion and Conclusions

Hypothesis One, that there would be a greater amount of acceptance than of rejection, was not supported and was, in fact, contradicted; the typical student respondent rejected significantly more deviants than he accepted. This would suggest that, rather than being more accepting, students were more rejecting of deviancy than expected.

The second hypothesis, that there would be greater acceptance of the social-physical deviants than of the political deviants, was supported by the results. Many of the social-physical deviants - e.g., the blind, the illiterate and the retarded - were probably non-threatening to the ordinary person. Deviant political philosophies, by contrast may well have been seen as more threatening,

particularly in view of that amorphous yet powerful force called "political climate." At the present time, political philosophies of the extreme right as well as those of the extreme left are under attack, each being seen as a threat to our own democratic philosophy. World tensions and international power struggles may also be contributing to a rejection of ideas which seem to diverge from a national "ideal," especially on the part of students who seem to be becoming more conservative in general after the activism of the 1970's and the Vietnam era. It is noteworthy that even the British Socialists representing a political system closely approaching our own, was rejected by almost two out of five respondents. The complete rejection of politically deviant groups, of both extreme right and extreme left, suggests to this researcher that there was an element of fear at work which was stronger than intellectual curiosity. This fear, it appears, could be instrumental in creating the conservatism and conformity that the study documents.

A second possible explanation of the greater acceptance of social-physical over politically deviant groups may be the factor of individual responsibility for the deviancy under consideration. The blind and mentally retarded, for example, may be perceived as victims of a condition over which they have no control; they should therefore not be condemned for something beyond their free choice. Similarly alcoholics were rejected by only 27%, perhaps because the alcoholic is increasingly seen as ill and as someone who cannot control his behavior. Heroin addicts, on the other hand, were rejected by 69% of the respondents, possibly because they represented to the students a social-physical deviation which is controllable, possible because our legal code defines them as criminals. Two other categories which could be seen as the result of individual choice, (prostitutes and theives), were each rejected by

two out of five of the respondents. Mental illness also elicited strong rejection: by 40 percent for the one who had been hospitalized for mental illness and 21 percent for the one in psychotherapy. Rejection of these candidates may have been primarily due to fear and misunderstanding of the nature of mental illness. Homosexuals were rejected by a relatively low 18%, an indication perhaps of the results of the recent "gay liberation" movements.

In summary, it seems that there was less acceptance for a deviant attitude or set of ideas, as it is assumed that any individual in our society can select his or her own political philosophy, and must carry the responsibility of that choice. Categories which have their origin in physical disabilities are more acceptable, and groups such as alcoholics and homosexuals, long stigmatized as morally deviant and accordingly rejected, are increasinly associated with physically disabled categories. Socially condemned groups which are volitionally created -- prostitutes, theives and the non-self-supporting -- are still rejected by the majority, by significant percents.

The third hypothesis, that there would be no difference between men and women in the degree to which they accepted or rejected any of the deviants, was confirmed. Not only were there no overall significant differences in the numbers of deviant categories accepted by both sexes, or in reaction to deviants overall, there were few differences in relation to specific groups.

The implication of these findings for this researcher is that the traditional view of the college student as open-minded, curious and exploring currently needs re-evaluation. If, in fact, the group in the survey represents a more educated and intellectually flexible segment of society, one must begin to question the role and meaning of "stereotype" to the individual and collective psyche. For it would appear that Bogardus' prediction 55 years ago, that stereotypes would be sustained for a long time, has once again been confirmed.

The question also arises as to what is the range of acceptance of deviation among the non-college population, i.e., the less intellectually trained? If the general population is even less accepting, how does this reflect on the democratic process and the ability of the society to grow through the absorption of new and different ideas? If, on the other hand, the non-college population is more accepting, what are the factors which produce this lack of acceptance of deviancy among college students? These issues, while not under consideration in this present study, seem to the researcher to be worthy of further consideration.

HANDOUT FOR:

College Students Attitudes' Towards
Social, Physical and Political Devicancy

Louise W. Fox, Ph.D.
Hunter College
City University of New York

Read at : Eastern Psychological Association Convention, Baltimore, Maryland

---

I. The Scale Used:

1. I would exclude this person from the U.S.A.
2. I would admit this person as a visitor only.
3. I would admit this person as a citizen.
4. I would admit this person to my field as a fellow worker
5. I would admit this person to my neighborhood to live
6. I would admit this person to close personal friendhsip
7. I would admit this person to my family through marriage.

II. The Social-Physical Deviants

1. A person of normal intelligence who is illiterate.
2. A person who is addicted to heroin.
3. A person who has recently been hospitalized for mental illness
4. A person who is totally blind
5. A prostitute.
6. An admitted homosexual.
7. An alcoholic
8. A person who is mentally retarded.
9. A person who is not and has not been self-supporting.
10. A person who has recently been in psychotherapy but not hospitalized
11. A person who has served time in prison for stealing.
12. A person who is a regular user of marijuana.
13. An atheist.

III. The Political Deviants

1. Ayatollah Khomeini's political-social philosophy.
2. The philosophy of the Russian Communist Party.
3. South Africa's "Apartheid" policy of racial segregation.
4. British Socialism.
5. The Philosophy of Castro.
6. Hitler's Nazi Philosophy.
7. The Philosophy of Black Separatism.
8. Opposing equal rights for women.
9. The philosophy of guerilla terrorism.
10. The philosophy of the Chinese Communists.
11. The philosophy of the Ku Klux Klan.

Table 1

For Each Stimulus Group, the Percent of Complete Acceptance, Limited Acceptance and Rejection, in Order of Acceptance
(N = 235)

	Stimulus Group	Complete Acceptance	Limited Acceptance	Rejection
6.	Blind	69	26	5
21.	Atheist	49	41	10
23.	Marijuana user	40	43	17
1.	Illiterate	36	40	15
8.	British Socialist	34	28	38
20.	In Psychotherapy	32	45	21
14.	Retarded	30	54	16
11.	Homosexual	30	52	18
13.	Alcoholic	23	50	27
9.	Prostitute	19	47	34
22.	Imprisoned for theft	17	45	38
5.	Hospitalized for mental illness	17	43	40
16.	Opposed to Equal Rights for Women	16	47	37
17.	Non-self-supporting	16	30	54
4.	Russian Communist	12	26	62
19.	Chinese Communist	8	26	66
12.	Supporter of Castro	7	25	68
3.	Heroin Addict	6	25	69
2.	Supporter of Ayatollah	6	20	74
15.	Black Separatist	4	40	56
7.	Supporter of Apartheid	4	35	69
10.	Nazi	2	18	80
18.	Guerilla Terrorist	2	11	87
24.	Ku Klux Klan Member	1	21	78

Table 2
Mean Percent of Complete Acceptance, Limited Acceptance and Rejection of Social-Physical and Political Deviants, For All Respondents

Degree of Acceptance	Political	Social-Physical
Complete	6	25
Limited	28	45
Rejection	63	30